

The Cause of, and Cure for, Discouragement - 1 Kings 19:1-14 - Sunday, November 21st, 2010

1 Kings 19:1-14 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. (2) Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." (3) And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. (4) But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (5) Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." (6) Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. (7) And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." (8) So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. (9) And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (10) So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." (11) Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; (12) and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (13) So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (14) And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." NKJV

- The text we have before us is perhaps one of the most astonishing passages of scripture recorded in the pages of Holy Writ.
- Here's why: "Elijah, who prayed that rain "would not" come down, and that fire "would" come down, is now himself, down."
- This is Elijah we're talking about, he's the same Elijah that just slew four hundred and fifty prophet's of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

- Now, he's running for his life, with a contract on his life, and we find him under a broom tree, praying God would take his life.
- What in the world has happened to this man Elijah, who here-to-fore, has been so amazingly and mightily used of God?
- The answer; he, like many of us, is now unspeakably discouraged and defeated in the Lord, and his service to the Lord.

- Let me hasten to say that Elijah's story isn't in scripture just to see how down he is, rather it's so we'll see how good God is.
- Elijah rises from the pages of scripture to show us how it is that we can deal with discouragement and even disillusionment.
- It is for this reason that in choosing a title for this teaching, I'm calling it; "The Cause of, and Cure for, Discouragement."

1. Keep your successes successfully (1 Kings 19:1)

- I suggest to you that on the heels of Elijah's miraculous victories he has become the most vulnerable to spiritual defeat.
- The Elijah's amongst us are most susceptible to discouragement subsequent to those mountain top experiences in life.
- It seems Satan knows this so he stalks us while he's roaming around like a lion waiting for this optimum time to devour us.

2. Keep your situation in perspective (1 Kings 19:2)

- Elijah loses perspective by exaggerating the threat when Jezebel sends him an email saying he'll be dead by the next day.
- One of the primary causes for discouragement, depression, and despair, is when we manufacture our worst case scenario.
- To do this is to give the enemy too much power over our lives, thus, we end up forgetting Who's really the Lord of our lives.

3. Keep yourself in fellowship (1 Kings 19:3-4)

- We're told that when Elijah is running for his life, that he actually "leaves his servant behind," so he can be by himself.
- Of course there's going to be those times when we need to be alone to seek God, but that's not what Elijah is doing here.
- He's cutting himself off from anyone and everyone who could be of immeasurable help for him, and a blessing to him.

4. Keep your focus on the Lord (1 Kings 19:4)

- Elijah tells the Lord that he's "no better than his father's." At first, he seems self deprecating, but actually he is self focused.
- Apparently what Elijah wanted for himself was that he would be known for being better than his father's before him.
- While there's nothing wrong with wanting to be better, it is wrong when being better than others is the focus of our lives.
- Focus on self/depressed, focus on others/stressed, focus on the Lord/blessed. (Build a bridge and get over self)**

5. Keep yourself healthy physically (1 Kings 19:5-8)

- Elijah is physically fatigued, and emotionally exhausted. Doubtless, he's very sleep deprived and very unhealthy physically.
- He's so unhealthy that the Lord has to let him just eat and sleep so he will have enough strength for 40 days and nights.
- I don't think this one cure can be overstated and, if the truth be known, is understated in being a major cause of depression.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book; "Spiritual Depression, It's Causes and its Cure" had this to say; "Does someone hold the view that as long as you are a Christian it does not matter what the condition of your body is? Well, you will soon be disillusioned if you believe that. Physical conditions play their part in all this. ...temperament seems to some degree to be controlled by physical conditions and there are certain people who constitutionally, almost in a physical sense, are prone to this condition. In other words, there are certain physical ailments which tend to promote depression. The greatest and the best Christians when they are physically weak are more prone to an attack of spiritual depression than at any other time and there are great illustrations of this in the Scriptures. ...when Elijah had that attack of spiritual depression after his heroic effort on Mount Carmel, he sat down under a juniper tree and felt sorry for himself. But the real thing he needed was sleep and food; and God gave him both! He gave him food and rest before He gave him spiritual help."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones "Spiritual Depression, It's Causes and its Cure" pp. 18, 19, 196

- In other words, when you're unhealthy in your body, you'll not be of a sound mind. We see an example of this in Psalms 42.

Psalm 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. KJV

- There's something here that can be easily missed; the Psalmist has stinken thinken and needs a check up from the neck up.

- Instead of disquieting, discouraging and depressing "self-talk," the Psalmist is having a "talk-to-self" and there's a difference.

Again, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes in his book "Spiritual Depression," saying; "Speak to your-self and say; away dull sloth and melancholy. Then stir up the gift, get up and do something."

6. Keep your expectations in check (1 Kings 19:9-10)

- This is where Elijah goes into a cave and the Lord asks him what he's doing there. Elijah is clearly disenchanted with God.
- Elijah tells God that he's done what was expected of him but it seems God has not done what Elijah expected He would do.
- Having expectations of what God will do, when He will do it, and even the way He should do it will sink us into despair.

Exodus 5:22-23 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; **neither have You delivered Your people at all.**" NKJV

7. Keep your windows open (1 Kings 19:11-14)

- God now has Elijah go out and stand on the mountain before Him then He passes by Elijah in a very dramatic way.
- First, it's a great strong wind, then, an earthquake, than after that, it's a fire, but the Lord didn't come in any of these.
- However, the Lord was in "a still small voice" asking Elijah the same exact question and Elijah gives the same exact answer.

- Why does the Lord do it this way? I believe the Lord knows that the Elijah's amongst us think God is only in the big.
- In other words, He's only in the strong wind experiences that quake and shake the earth; and not the "still and the small."
- Here's what I'm thinking; if your still in Smallsville," take heart, and be of good courage, because God is still in the still, small.

- God may not choose to come in the big earth shaking door rather; He may wish to come in that still small window.
- We would do well to keep those windows open, because sometimes still and small will do things that big and dramatic can't.

"The accent in the Church today," says Leonard Ravenhill, the English evangelist, "is not on devotion, but on commotion." Religious extroversion has been carried to such an extreme in evangelical circles that hardly anyone has the desire, to say nothing of the courage, to question the soundness of it. Externalism has taken over. God now speaks by the wind and the earthquake only; the still small voice can be heard no more. The Root of the Righteous, p.p. 84, 85.

8. Keep your eyes on the prize (2 Kings 2:11)

- Here we're told that while Elijah is walking and talking he's suddenly caught up to heaven with horses and a chariot of fire.
- We see him again with Moses at the Mount of Transfiguration where we're told that they were actually talking with Jesus.